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*James Wood's Directions
to Class-Leaders,*

1804

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DIRECTIONS AND CAUTIONS,

ADDRESSED TO THE

CLASS-LEADERS,

IN THE

Methodist Connection;

AND DESIGNED TO SHEW

THE NATURE OF THEIR OFFICE,

AND THE

NECESSITY OF THEIR BEING FAITHFUL

IN THE

DISCHARGE OF THEIR DUTY.

By JAMES WOOD.

"Now we exhort you, Brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all:"

1 THESS. V. 14.

monomona
THE SECOND EDITION.

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P R E F A C E.

THE Author of this Pamphlet has long seen the necessity and advantage of having holy, zealous, and active Class-Leaders, in the Methodist Societies. Where such are found, Scriptural Christianity makes its way and flourishes; but where they are not, the Preachers have an almost intolerable burden to bear, while their designs and labours are rendered comparatively useless. Earnest and judicious Leaders, will be helpful even to dull Preachers; but those who are the reverse, are always a dead weight upon such Preachers as are most lively. Under the care of the former, the members of Society greatly prosper, but under the influence of the latter, they decline from the simplicity of the gospel, or rest in a form of godliness without ever knowing its power. A keen conviction of the truth of these things, has produced this little tract upon the subject. The Writer of it is not so vain as to imagine that its contents are new to his Brethren and Fathers in the gospel, or even to a great number of the Class-Leaders in our connection. He rather thinks that they have been maturely considered, and, by some of them at least, are better understood, than by himself. "But if so," it may be asked, "Why do you trouble the Public with this work?" He answers,

1. He thinks something of the kind is necessary; but others, altho' more able, have not executed it; therefore he has ventured to write, hoping to draw forth the exertion of superior talents.

2. He wishes to stir up the pure minds of lively, useful Leaders, by way of *remembrance*; knowing in himself the possibility of losing sight even of those things, which are deemed peculiarly important and profitable.

3. Altho' these things may be familiar to his Brethren, the Preachers, yet he thinks they will not ob-

ject to such a little help as this ; which may save them the labour of verbally repeating the same advices over and over again, when they might be employed in the more pleasing exercise of studying, or preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ.

4. There is almost a constant accession of Preachers to the Body, some of whom may not have had much opportunity of seeing the importance of the subject. They may have lived, where no fallen Leaders were in office ; but where the fence of christian discipline was kept up, and order and harmony were preserved in the Society. These therefore, having seen only the fair side of the subject, may possibly derive some little assistance from this attempt.

5. In large Societies, new Leaders are frequently wanted ; every one of whom should be informed of every thing contained in this Pamphlet, and should have the large Minutes of the Conference, as soon as he is put into office. If the Superintendant of a Circuit were furnished with something of this kind in print, it would render unnecessary, as was before intimated, the trouble of repeating to them the same things by verbal information, and Leaders might recur to it frequently for the refreshing of their memories.

These Directions were first written for those Leaders with whom the author has now the happiness to labour, and read to them at a meeting held for that purpose. They earnestly requested that they might have the whole in print for their own perusal, which he promised them. He ardently wishes that this labour of love may be abundantly crowned with the blessing of Heaven, and be rendered useful to that people, with whom he esteems it an honour to be united in christian fellowship.

DIRECTIONS to CLASS-LEADERS.

VERY DEAR FRIENDS,

THE office which you are called to fill in the Methodist Society, is peculiarly important. Precious souls are committed to your care, and you are expected, according to our Rules, to enquire weekly, How they prosper; What progress they make in the knowledge of divine things; and What increase they have of faith, love, and every grace of the Holy Spirit;—to mark what hinders any of them from growing in grace:—and to point out to all, such things as are most likely to help them in christian experience and practice. Much, therefore, under the Divine blessing, depends on your fidelity to God, and to the members of your Classes:

1. *On your fidelity to God.* Your office supposes that you have experienced the Divine favour; that you now live in the comforts of the Holy Spirit; and are pressing towards the mark, for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus. This is invariably required of every person who is made a Class-Leader in the Methodist Society; and most certainly it is as necessary to retain that grace in order to be useful, as it was to possess it when you were first put into office. But no person can retain it without increasing in every grace of the Holy Spirit. We are either gaining or losing every moment; are reaching forth, or going back; are gathering with Christ, or scattering abroad. It is therefore of very great importance, that you hold fast whereunto you have attained, and faithfully improve every talent committed to your trust.

2. *On your faithfulness to those who meet with you.* In this is implied, what should be the first thing

with you in the execution of your office, a close enquiry into the state of their minds, and a care to see that they be either true *penitents*, or *genuine christian believers*. The former evidence that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation; and on their giving proof of this, they should be urged by arguments, and encouraged by promises, to seek redemption thro' the blood of Christ *by faith*. Nor ought they to be suffered to rest till they are quite clear in their justification. Great care should be taken to prevent their resting in the drawings of the Father, on the one hand; and, on the other, to keep them from being discouraged by a sight of their guilt and misery. They should be exhorted to ~~way~~ hold on the hope set before them, and to ~~wash~~ away their sins, calling on the Name of the Lord.

Those who profess to have been justified, should be tenderly, yet closely examined, as to the evidence of their acceptance. You ought to inform them that if they have it not, the safety of their state may be justly questioned; for as a *corrupt tree* cannot bring forth *good fruit*; so a *good tree* cannot bring forth *corrupt fruit*. If the *fruit* of the Spirit be not evidenced in the life and conversation, there is no proof of his *indwelling*; and yet we are assured by the Apostle, that "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 9. If this doctrine be not strongly urged by Leaders, as well as by Preachers, *formality* will inevitably creep in, and gradually destroy the spirit of true devotion. At the same time, those of your charge who walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Spirit, should be encouraged to seek the perfect love of God, as earnestly as ever they sought the Divine favour. The privilege of their enjoying it ought to be set before them in as clear a light as possible, that they may at once go up and possess the land of promise. This will make holiness appear amiable in their eyes. It

will become the chief object of their desire and aim; and they will feel a hope of being saved from all their enemies, and of serving God, without painful fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.

Another thing which a Leader ought to consider as a part of his duty, and which is closely connected with the preceding observation, is, to see that all who meet with him conform to the Rules of the Society. These Rules require the members to use regular *family* and *private prayer*. No one should be admitted, who will not engage to do this, nor be continued in Society, if found in the habitual neglect of these duties. You should likewise recommend, by persuasion and example, to all those who are committed to your care, an attendance on the Lord's-Supper, at least once a month, if possible. These are important points; for if the worship of God be neglected in the *family*, the Lord will pour his fury upon it; if private prayer be not kept up, the precept of Christ is notoriously violated; and if the Lord's-Supper be not duly attended, one of the most sacred of his institutions is treated with indifference, if not contempt.

Faithful reproofs and admonitions, when necessary, are duties not less essential to your office, than those things which have been already mentioned. Whatever error or sin you may conceive any of your members to be in danger of falling into, you should apprize them of it as speedily as possible, and strongly urge them to shun the snare; and this you should do without respect of persons.

Should any of those who meet with you, be overtaken by a fault, the evil should be clearly pointed out to him, and reproof should be given with *tenderness*, or *sharpness*, according to the nature and magnitude of the sin, and according to the *contrition* or *hardness* of heart which he may discover. The subtilty of satan, and the deep depravity of human nature, will require all the attention and

care you can bestow, in order to remove every false prop; and, lead all your members to build scripturally on the Rock of Ages. You must watch over them with a godly jealousy, lest any of those who have believed, should be drawn away from the simplicity that is in Christ; and as narrowly mark their progress, or their backwardness, as a skilful physician would notice the increase, or decrease of his patient's disease.

In some Classes, it has been remarked, that persons have adopted phrases which are *ambiguous* or *evasive*, or to say the least, *improper*. For instance, if a member be asked the state of his mind, he probably answers, "I have cause to be thankful." This may possibly be spoken in the simplicity of his heart, and from a grateful sense of the mercy, and goodness of God; but it may be otherwise. It will, therefore, be proper for you to ask him, *for what* he has cause to be thankful? If he be perplexed by such a question, there is reason to fear that the phrase was used evasively. But, allowing it to have been used without guile, and that the person can readily point out those mercies which call for thankfulness, yet there is no proof, from his using it, that he really is thankful to God for his benefits. Such a phrase, therefore, should never be suffered to come into common use in a Methodist Society. And on these occasions, it will be peculiarly necessary to find out, if possible, the real temper and bent of the soul, and the motives which influence the life and conversation.

If you ask another the state of his mind, he will probably say, "I am not very comfortable, at present, for I have many difficulties in the world, and am much tried and tempted." In this case, if you suffer the matter to rest here, without farther enquiry, or if you immediately attempt to apply the promises of God to him for his comfort, you may be suspected of a want of feeling for him on the one hand; or be in real danger, tho' undesignedly,
of

of leading him to rest in a false peace, on the other. It will be highly expedient, therefore, as far as christian prudence will admit, that you should know the *nature* of his difficulties, and *how* he is afflicted by them; in order that you may more fully sympathize with him in his sufferings, and give him such advice as may be rendered useful to his soul. It will be necessary also to inform him, that no trials, or temptations whatever, can, of themselves, hinder him from growing in grace; that if he be not increasing in the knowledge and love of God, the hindrance is not from *without*, but *in himself*; that it is not because he is *tried* or *tempted*, but because he looks at his afflictions, instead of looking to Jesus Christ for Help under them; or because he gives place to satan who tempts him to evil. Joseph was tempted by his lascivious mistress, Hannah by her upbraiding adversary, Saul by satan; and all christians, more or less, have had their share of conflicts with the powers of darkness; but they were not hindered by them from growing in the knowledge and love of God. No member of your Classes should be ignorant of this; nor be suffered to excuse his murmuring or impatience, his sloth or negligence, his anxiety, or distrust of God, by complaining of his trials and difficulties in the world.

You may possibly find another person, pleading his numerous engagements in temporal concerns, not only in excuse for not meeting his Class every week, according to the Rules of the Society, but also as a reason why his soul does not prosper. If you yourselves be not men of business, it may be difficult for you to make sufficient allowance for him in the first instance; or in the second, to be plain and faithful without his taking offence. Yet it will be needful for you to put him upon enquiry, whether his business or employment be in itself a lawful one; for there are some employments which are not so, and therefore cannot be followed with

a good conscience. But if the business in itself be *proper*, it may, for the sake of gain, be pushed beyond the bounds of prudence, in point of extent. If men launch out beyond what their capital will command, they must be always embarrassed in their circumstances : or if they go beyond their capacity of mind, they must be perpetually encumbered in their spirits : Or if the business be such as not to leave sufficient time for private devotion and relative duties, it certainly ought to be abandoned, or curtailed. But, however lawful their employment be in itself, and tho' it may be managed with ease, they may be kept from peace and prosperity of soul, by an undue attachment to their occupations in life. In order, therefore, to give such advice as will be useful to their souls, you must labour to find out *what it is* in business, that hinders them in the narrow way ; and shew them the absolute necessity of their making the salvation of their souls the one great business of life, and of bringing every temporal concern into subjection to it. Great pains must be taken with such persons to make them deeply sensible, that a lawful occupation properly managed, is no hindrance at all to religion : yea that idleness is totally incompatible with the spirit of true devotion ; that of consequence, if they do not prosper, they must look for the cause of barrenness in their own breast, and search for it as they would for a thief or a murderer. And they must be urged to cast out this evil, as they would a thief out of their houses. Soft words will seldom avail here : They must be drawn out of the snare, if possible, by the bands of scripture and reason, and by the cords of brotherly love.

Again :—That rule of the Society which forbids a person "*borrowing* without a probability of paying, or *taking up goods* without a probability of paying for them," should be frequently and strongly urged by every Leader. But this cannot be expected,

pected, if he himself be involved in the same evil, or if he be embarrassed in his circumstances. For this reason, no man should be put into this office, who is not free from such difficulties; nor ought he to continue in it, knowing himself to be so circumstanced.

Should it be said, by way of objection, that, "A Leader's resigning his office for such a reason, would bring his creditors upon him immediately, and increase his distress:"—it may be answered, 1. That very few creditors would be disposed to severe measures towards a man of known uprightness; because they would have confidence in him that he would act from principle: 2. If the Leader's circumstances be really bad, if he be unable to pay every lawful demand, he ought, ~~by~~ justice to his creditors, to acquaint them fully with the real state of his affairs. This open conduct will never injure an honest man. Bad as the world is, integrity is respected, even by wicked men. An *upright, conscientious Leader*, has, therefore, nothing to fear on this account; and certainly none but such ought to be found in that office.

There are yet other characters found in Society, who will require all your care and skill, in order to deal properly with them, viz. *unstable professors*. The numerous instances of such persons, which occur in every large Society in the kingdom, strongly call for enquiry into the cause. According to our view of things, it is very possible for a man to fall from *any* state of grace into sin and misery; yet there is reason to fear, that many of those who leave our Society never did experience a thorough change of heart, but mistook the drawings of the Father for a sense of pardoning mercy, or rested in some supposed voice, or sight of the Saviour, as an evidence of their justification. It is highly necessary, therefore, to try every member in your Classes, by close and searching questions, as to the reality of their conversion to God, and to assure them

them that no faith which is not productive of holy tempers, and an upright conversation, is the faith of the gospel. In such instances, one of the following things must be the cause of apostasy : 1. They professed to have pardon, when in fact they had not : or, 2. They were not sufficiently cautioned and instructed how to hold fast the beginning of their confidence : or, 3. They are unfaithful stewards of the Lord's manifold gifts.

Many of these persons seem at times to be all on stretch for heaven ; they attend the means of grace with great diligence ; they appear to be zealous and active ; and promise fair to be useful members of Society. But their religious warmth is of short duration ; they are warped aside, loiter by the way, halt between ~~two~~ ^{two} opinions, or turn back again to worldly ~~pleasure~~ ^{pleasure} and profit. Some of these are constitutionally warm in their passions, and are exceedingly apt to take offence ; while others are of such an easy, pliable disposition, that they are liable to be drawn aside by any *designing* or *prejudiced* professor. The former class of persons are disposed to rush from one extreme to another ; they are generally at first too sanguine in their views of men ; and afterwards are ready to say with the Psalmist, " All men are liars." As the causes of instability are various, it will be necessary for you to enquire, whether it result from constitution, education, the love of filthy lucre, or weakness of understanding ; for the advice, which would be proper in one of these cases, would not be so in all. Consider closely, what are the most likely means of preserving such persons from being tossed to and fro ; and deal gently, yet faithfully, with them, if haply they may become pillars in the Lord's house, to go out no more.

You may have occasion to remark yet farther, that certain persons in your Classes will be complaining of barrenness of soul, of their backwardness to duty, or of unhappiness of mind, almost every

every time they meet with you. So far as it respects their sincerity, you cannot but esteem them for declaring what their real state is ; yet without any breach of charity, you must suspect there is some cause for that of which they thus complain. For if you see a man quite emaciated, and hear him lament that he has no appetite for food, and that his body is full of pain, you justly infer that he is not in a good state of health ; and you may as justly conclude, that those persons who are habitually complaining, do not possess the healthful spirit of divine grace. It should, therefore, be your aim to find out the true cause of this barrenness, that you may, thro' the help of God, lead them to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and daily to feed on the bread of eternal life.

Perhaps in some few instances, where this may have been produced by discouragement, it may be found, upon close enquiry, that you yourselves have been partly the cause. Have you repeatedly and faithfully pointed out to them the danger of their state, and the absolute necessity of their having on the wedding garment, if they would meet the Bridegroom with joy ?—Do you say, “Yes ; I never meet them, but I do this :” So far you have done well ; but if you go no farther, you will lose all your labour with them. Have you also pointed them to the LAMB of GOD, as ready to take away all their sins ? Have you encouraged them to hope for a present salvation ? Have you travailed as in birth for them, that Christ might be formed in them, the hope of eternal glory ? Perhaps they have been like some forlorn strangers, destitute of food, money, and friends, who had nearly relinquished all hope of relief, and were just ready to lie down and die. O take these diffident, discouraged creatures by the hand ; plead with the Father of mercies for them ; and labour to raise in their souls an expectation of a sure and speedy deliverance from their present barrenness and

and misery. Hope is a spring of action ; and remember, that no man can hope too much, provided he labours to secure that which he hopes for. Take away hope from the distressed mariner, and he will give up all his efforts to save the ship ; deprive the soldier of his helmet, and he will yield the palm of victory to the enemy ; but while hope is cherished, they will rather die striving, than in a cowardly manner cease from their endeavours. In like manner, if these discouraged persons can be persuaded to *hope* for prosperity of soul, they will gladly and fervently pray for it, and the Lord will assuredly give them the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

You have undoubtedly observed, likewise, either in your own classes, or in others, imminent danger of *formality*. This may arise from giving out too long hymns, or singing them in a *slow, inactive* manner ; from the same persons exercising in prayer at every meeting, without a sufficient variety ; or from their praying too long at a time. These evils you should ever guard against ; as they would certainly be inlets to formality in your worship. Punctuality in beginning exactly at the time appointed, is of great importance, in which you should be constant examples to your flocks. Nor is it a trivial evil, to keep your meetings for an hour and an half, or two hours together, whether on the sabbath day, or on a week-day. If it be on the latter, those who are servants ought not to be kept so long from the service of their Master ; if on the former, they ought to have time for reading the scriptures and private prayer, which cannot be, if they be kept so long at their Class. Women who have children can ill be spared so long from them ; and if they have husbands who are unfriendly to religion, their being so long detained, is the ready way to increase the prejudice already imbibed ; or if their partners in life be religious, they will certainly wish for a little of their wives' company

company on the Lord's day. No Class should be generally kept more than an hour, or an hour and ten minutes at the utmost. If it be too large to be met in that time, it ought to be divided immediately,

But nothing can possibly prevent *formality* from creeping into your Classes, if your members be not strongly, affectionately, and constantly urged to expect a *present and a full salvation*. Something beyond what is now possessed should be always held out to them, as an incentive to them to forget those things which are behind, and to reach forth to those things which are before them; which, they should ever remember, are to be received by faith. This will preserve them from resting in superficial attainments, or from yielding to unprofitable reasonings; and will keep all the powers of their souls on stretch for entire holiness, and for an abundant entrance into heaven.

Another important branch of your duty I shall take the liberty of urging upon you. According to the Rules of the Methodist Society, you ought to see *every* member in your Class *once* a week at least. But some of them may be kept from meeting with you by reason of sickness, and others may be unavoidably hindered by business. In either case, it becomes your duty to look after them, and to enquire into the cause of their absence. If prevented by affliction, they will want your sympathy and aid; if by business, they will need your advice and caution; for sometimes those persons who are lawfully hindered in the first instance, may be kept away a second time thro' foolish backwardness, or violent temptation, unless they be sought after in due season. If any one should be growing weary of well-doing, nothing is so likely to prevent his total apostacy, as timely advice and exhortation. If a Leader be not faithful and diligent in this important point, either by himself or by his substitute, nothing can excuse him from just censure. If he
cannot

cannot discharge this part of his duty, either thro' bodily infirmities, or temporal engagements, he should have some one appointed as an assistant to him; or he should resign his office, and become a private member of society. In saying this, I have no fear of giving offence to a truly pious Leader, so circumstanced; because such a man will always prefer the prosperity of Sion to his chief personal joy: He will see it to be a matter of such magnitude, that he will be willing to be abased, if the Saviour may be exalted.

Those leaders who, from a right principle, are exemplary in this part of their duty, are sure to possess the affection of their brethren who meet with them, while they continue to walk uprightly; but where this is frequently neglected, they must lose, in a considerable degree, the attachment of the people. Nor will it often stop here; prejudices will spring up; offences will be taken; and the latent principle of pride in the heart will construe this omission into *contempt* of them, especially if they be poor in the world. Many young persons who promised to be useful in the Church of Christ, thro' this species of unfaithfulness in their Leaders, have fallen into one temptation after another, till they have completely measured their steps back to earth again, and have become more fully than ever the servants of unrighteousness. This is an awful consideration, and should rouse every Leader who has been remiss in his duty to double his diligence, that he may give up his account with joy.

The fidelity of Leaders has yet farther work to perform. In the present state of things, unless there be a peculiar openness of spirit, and a great depth of piety, little misunderstandings are very apt to arise among professors, which will require your vigilant attention, and faithful admonitions. In order to prevent these, as far as you can, you should make it your invariable rule of conduct, not to receive a complaint from one person against another,

another, which the *accuser* will not meet the *accused* with. The same line of conduct should also be pressed on every man who meets with you. When any person comes with a complaint against another, he should be asked, "Have you mentioned this to the person himself, according to the word of Christ, Matt. xviii. 15. &c. "If thy brother sin against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone?" No accusation against any one ought to have the smallest countenance from you, until this be done; and even then it may be well not to hear one side alone, lest your mind should be biased, and rendered incapable of forming a right judgment of the affair. If a Leader be attentive to every member of his Class, impartial in his conduct, and prudent in his procedure on such occasions, the designs of satan and his emissaries will be happily frustrated; peace and harmony in the Society will be preserved; and the word of the Lord will mightily prevail.

Another thing must be noticed, which is of importance to the well-being of every Society, viz. the preservation of order and decorum in your social approaches to God. All should be present at the beginning of the worship; the high praises of God should be sung with all the cheerfulness which is consistent with a proper reverence of the Divine Being; and prayer ought to be offered up to him in the most solemn manner.* During the time that you are speaking to any person, there ought to be no *talking* or *whispering* in the meeting. It would be very improper to suffer this, unless any one should be taken ill, or something equivalent to it should occur. When the meeting is over, all should

* Some very ignorant people, in repeating the Lord's Prayer, are apt to take undue liberties with it. Instead of saying, "Lead us not into temptation," they say, "leave us not in temptation." And again, as tho' the Saviour of the world had not known how to fill it up properly, they add after the word from, *all*, and say "deliver us from *all* evil." This unwarrantable freedom with the word of God, must not be tolerated.

be requested to return to their habitations, and not to contract the habit of conversing, in little companies, until every serious impression be well nigh lost, as in some instances, it may be feared, is the case. This is more especially necessary, where there are several young persons, who may, thro' a want of the experience of age, be most liable to suffer loss by such conduct. But in fact, the public means of grace among the Methodists are so numerous, that it is absolutely impossible for our people to have sufficient leisure for family and private duties, unless they be very careful to redeem every moment of time. They will not by hearing the word preached, and meeting their Class *only*, be well acquainted with the scriptures; and yet without this, how can we expect them to be firm and steady in their profession, or circumspect and uniform in their practice? *

Every Leader should likewise take care that all those who meet with him be in possession of the RULES OF THE SOCIETY, and that they conscientiously observe them. These Rules require that every one who is admitted into fellowship with us, shall evidence his desire of salvation, not only by avoiding drunkenness, but also by *not drinking spirituous liquors*, unless in cases of extreme necessity. Altho' this requisition may, at first sight, have the appearance of rigid severity, yet, upon mature consideration, it will be found to have the happiest tendency to promote the health of the body, the purity of the soul, and its everlasting

* This is a point of unspeakable importance, respecting which every Leader ought frequently and closely to *examine* the Members of his Class. He should insist, in the strongest terms, upon the absolute necessity of *reading in private* the Holy Scriptures which are able to make them wise unto salvation. No dependance can ordinarily be placed upon the stability of a professor, who habitually neglects this duty. His comforts will be variable and fluctuating; his conduct will often be irregular and disorderly; and his piety will want that depth and solidity, which, in a world of temptations like ours, are essential to its permanency.

peace and happiness. Every member ought also to evidence his desire of salvation by not buying or selling, nor by doing any ordinary work, on the Lord's-day. The due observation of these Rules, is of great importance to the welfare of Society.

There are some other things, which tho' of far less moment than the above, may be of considerable use in meeting the Classes, and in maintaining proper discipline in the Society. Every Leader should see that all those who meet with him, renew their Society-Ticket every quarter, and bring it with them to every meeting of the Society, according to the original Rule and custom of the Methodists. He should likewise inform them of the manner in which our temporal affairs are conducted, and should encourage them, by exhortation and example, to contribute regularly to the support of the work, as their circumstances will admit.

In every Leader's Class-Paper, the Attendance of the Members should be properly marked thus:

A. for absence;—i. e. when the Member could have come, but did not.

D. for distance;—when he was out on a journey.

B. for business;—when unavoidable engagements prevented him.

S. for sickness;—when he was detained by the indisposition of himself, or family.

Their *state* also should be distinctly marked in the Margin as follows:

②. i. e. doubtful; when the true state of the Member is not yet discovered.

a. i. e. one who is a penitent; who is seeking for salvation, but does not profess to enjoy living faith in Christ.

o. i. e. one who professes to be in a state of justification.

b. —one who meets in band.

s. b. —one who meets in the select band.

The station in life of every person should be noticed thus;—Sr. i. e. a servant;—m. —married;—f. —single;—wr. —widower;—w. —widow.

If the preceding observations be just, it will appear to be a matter of very great importance to the Methodist connection, that caution should be used in putting men into this office; and that they ought to be men of sterling piety, of a good natural understanding, and of solid judgment. It will be utterly impossible for them to fill their places properly, without the love of God in their hearts as a sacred fire, inflaming them with holy zeal for his glory and the salvation of souls; nor can they be expected to discharge their duty well, any longer than they retain this principle in their own breasts. It is equally certain that they should be men capable of advising their brethren properly when in difficulties, of distinguishing truth from falsehood, and temptation from sin; that they ought to be well acquainted with the human heart, with the devices of satan, and with the work of the Holy Spirit; and that they should be persons of *influence*, arising from religion, such as eminently pious men are likely to have in christian society, if possessed of a good intellectual capacity.

It will appear likewise, that Class-Leaders may *outlive* their usefulness, as such, either by unfaithfulness to God; by encumbering themselves with too much business, so as not to leave them time to seek after their people; or by the infirmities of age. In the two first of these cases, they ought, without favour or affection, to be displaced; and others, more proper, should be called to labour in the vineyard. And in the last instance, the good man should be assisted in his labour by some more active person; or he should resign it of his own accord. No public ministrations will be sufficient to maintain the life of religion in individuals, or to preserve the purity of the body, without faithful Leaders

ders in the Society. The hedge of discipline cannot be kept up, nor proper order be enforced, without the aid of Leaders; but this aid cannot be expected from them unless they be men of God. If they be not strictly and universally conscientious, they will not help their Preachers to urge the observance of our Rules. Or if their own experience be superficial, how can they be expected to set before their brethren the deep things of God, or excite them to go on to perfect holiness?

But it has been asked, Are all our Leaders such as are above described? Have they now *fellowship* with the Father and the Son Jesus Christ? Are they all pressing towards the mark of entire holiness? Blessed be God, many of them not only answer this character, but are happy witnesses that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and can say to their brethren, "Be ye followers of us, as we are of Christ." These persons, living in the spirit of truth and love, are rendered remarkably useful; the cautions, reproofs, and advices, which they give, are attended with the blessing of God; their fervent requests to the Almighty are graciously answered and their holy example speaks aloud to every person committed to their care. Yet it may be greatly feared, that some Leaders are suffered to remain in office, in various places, who have left their first love, and of consequence, their first zeal for God and regard for souls. This is evidenced by sinful tempers, foolish desires, and worldly cares; which make them extremely unhappy in themselves, and useless in their station.

This departure from God in Class-Leaders, will prove exceedingly hurtful to their Classes in a variety of ways.

1. In meeting their brethren, it will naturally lead them, when speaking their own experience, to complain of darkness of mind, and barrenness of soul; of trials and afflictions in the world; and of the hazard they are in of losing all their little religion.

gion. Too many will be ready to follow them in this mode of complaining, to the discouragement of the few who may still be alive to God, and the dishonour of that service which is perfect freedom. Nor does the evil end here; for the deceitfulness of the heart is thus concealed, both in Leaders and private members; and the hindrance of their growing in grace is falsely imputed to trials and afflictions. Hence the *real* hindrance remains undiscovered, and unlamented; and so long as they continue in this state, they cannot possibly prosper in their souls.

2. It will prevent them from being so strict in their enquiries, so faithful in reprovings, or so diligent in urging those under their care to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth easily beset them, as they would be, if they themselves were truly alive to God.

3. It will almost constantly induce Leaders to heal their people slightly. For instance; to such members as have by repeated acts of unfaithfulness, brought themselves into a state of darkness and condemnation; these Leaders, wishing to comfort them in their distress, will indiscreetly apply the promises of God; and perhaps labour to find some unscriptural excuse for *human frailties*, so called. They are in imminent danger of attempting to lower the standard of divine truth, and of daubing with untempered mortar, by thus endeavouring to provide consolation for themselves and others in an unscriptural way. And altho', in such a case, we wish to allow their intention to be good, yet they manifest a great want of spiritual understanding in the things of God.

4. There is yet another evil with which this departure from God, in Leaders, is pregnant. They will be far less watchful against the admission of improper members into their Classes, or the continuance of others who are known to walk disorderly. Hence, if they have any increase in number, those
who

who are added will be such as have little knowledge of themselves, or concern about the state of their minds; or if they be truly awakened thro' the Word and Spirit of God, they will be in considerable danger of falling asleep again, under the influence of such Leaders. Thus tares spring up with the wheat, by which the spread of genuine religion is greatly hindered.

It is true that Leaders, and others, who are in this state, may meet their Classes with tolerable regularity, and in their moral conduct be respectable; yet they meet and part without receiving, or even expecting, any great good to their souls. They meet complaining; and they part desponding. A round of duties is thus performed with reluctance, and a form of godliness is kept up; by which means conscience remains in tolerable quiet. Here we may see one cause of doubt, fear, and dread, in professors of religion on a death-bed: their lamps are not well trimmed, their loins are not girded, nor are they ready to go forth and meet the Bridegroom.

Wherever, therefore, such Leaders as have forsaken the Lord in heart are found in office, they should be faithfully admonished by their Brethren, or by the Preachers who labour among them; and if they do not repent and do their first works, they should be removed, and others put in their room. No personal respect ought to outweigh with us the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom; nor should our attachment to men ever make us unfaithful to God. The more this subject is candidly and scripturally considered, the more will its importance appear to such as are zealous for the honour of their Lord. Next in point of importance to faithful, laborious Preachers, are lively, active, judicious Class-Leaders, for usefulness in the Methodist Connection.

And now, dear friends, suffer the word of exhortation. You have an honourable office; a considerable sphere of action; and if you live in the
spirit

spirit of true devotion, you may be extensively useful. The fruit of your labour will not be confined to those who meet with you. They will carry the light, which they receive from you, to their families, their neighbours, and their christian friends. These again will extend the rays of knowledge and holiness to the circle of *their* acquaintance, and thus you may be useful to thousands of souls in the present age; and generations yet to come may bless God to all eternity, for what may be conveyed to them thro' your instrumentality. Know the dignity of your calling, the great importance of filling your place well, the strict account you must certainly give at the day of judgment; and be found much in prayer to God for divine aid. Constantly act in dependance on him, in whom is everlasting strength. Distrust yourselves, your knowledge, your strength, your all; and humbly ask in confidence, that the divine presence may go with you. If you have this, you will never have a barren meeting; but be like trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth fruit in season. You will experience a blessed union of spirit with your people, an union which shall be as lasting as your existence, and firmer than the pillars of the earth. Go on, my dear friends, to spread scriptural holiness to the utmost of your power; and in due time you shall reap, if ye faint not, and shall know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

